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To determine present trends in junior novels, researchers compared 23 novels written after 1959 with characteristics of junior novels written before that date. The following trends were identified: (1) The action in the majority of novels occurs over a few months. (2) Simple and compound sentences often connected by "and" predominate. (3) The unrealistic success of heroes is giving way to success achieved with some difficulty. (4) Characters are fundamentally serious, complex, and dignified. (5) The ages of heroes and heroines vary from nine to middle age. (6) Although the middle-class standards of living are reflected in the majority of the novels, exceptions to this are frequently evident. (7) Profanity or allusions to sexual activity are seldom used. (8) Although the omniscient point of view predominates, experimentation (e.g., shifts in point of view within a novel) is taking place. (9) Didacticism is evident in most novels. (10) Themes reflect not only the adolescent's problems in growing up, but also some use of satire and the areas of racial tension, science fiction, and the depression years. Many of the recent junior novels are well-written and "are improving to the point that some of them may well survive as classics." (SW)

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Recent Trends in Fiction for Adolescents

James E. Davis

Associate Professor of English
Morehead State University
Morehead, Kentucky

THIS article could more appropriately be entitled "Trends in the Junior Novel Since 1959," but in light of the controversial nature of that title, a more euphemistic one was chosen. The first phase of this investigation was a study of the research conducted and written about the junior novel, especially unpublished research, to discover some of its main characteristics up to the year 1959. Some of the studies bear later dates, but the selection of novels in them does not go into the Sixties. The second phase was to select junior novels written since 1959 to compare and contrast them with those written before that date.

Some of the questions to be answered were: (1) To what extent is the genre, if it is that, being perpetuated? (2) What changes in terms of themes and style have been taking place? (3) Is the junior novel still generally well-written? Regarding the third question, it might be pointed out that many critics, including Frank Jennings, who is quoted by Dunning, in his study,[1] have maintained that the junior novels are generally poorly written, but that others, including Stanley Kegler and Stephen Dunning, have argued that they are improving in quality (*English Journal*, May 1964, p. 391).

Studies by Bertha Handlan, Richard Alm, Dorothy Petitt, William Evans, Nathan Blount, and Dwight Burton were also consulted for background information on both the characteristics of the junior novel and reactions to it. Information in these studies provided the basis for all comments here regarding the junior novels which were written before 1960. To limit the number of books to be studied, a list of 88 books was prepared from authors suggested by Dwight L. Burton and John Simmons, Department of English Education, Florida State University; Robert E. Shafer, Department of English, Arizona State University at Tempe; Juanita Devette, Librarian, Florida State University High School; Agnes Gregory of the Florida State University Library School. *Books for You, Horizons Unlimited, Books in Print*, the semiannual "Junior Book Round-Up" in *English Journal*, and Scholastic Book Services were also consulted.

The process of limiting the list to a

[1] Arthur Stephenson Dunning. *A Definition of the Role of the Junior Novel Based on Analyses of Thirty Selected Novels.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation (Tallahassee: Florida State University, 1959).

more realistic number for the purposes and scope of this study was quite difficult. Books which appeared on more than one list were retained along with books which were highly recommended, or seemed likely to show some new trend. Preference was also given to books by authors who had been dealt with previously in studies of the junior novel to see what changes had occurred in the content and style of long-established junior novelists. Admittedly, the process of limitation, though necessary, was highly unscientific. A list of the 23 novels finally chosen appears at the end of this article.

THESE 23 novels were reviewed in several areas—for the most part areas suggested in one or more of the studies consulted. The areas include: time, sentence length, hero's success, treatment of life, age of protagonist, mores and living standards reflected, use of profanity, treatment of sex, point of view, didacticism, thematic concerns, and contemporaneity.[2]

Dorothy Petitt[3] says that the action in most of the novels she studied occurred in a year or less (p. 314). In 21 of the 23 novels studied here, this is also true. The time is usually only a few months. Of the two exceptions, *Snow in the River* covers about 20 years, and *A Wrinkle in Time* covers many light years but only one earth day. Time moved forward in most of the books Petitt reviewed, as it does in all the books studied here, except *A Wrinkle in Time*, where "tessering" makes it a little hard to say.

One of the important matters of style, especially in terms of the audience for which these novels are written, is sentence length. Petitt's observation (p. 338) that the adolescent novels were written predominantly in simple and compound sentences most often connected by "and" still seems to hold true, although the writers are by no means confined to compound and simple constructions.

According to Dunning (p. 65), the hero of the junior novel is usually successful in solving the problems which confront him or in reaching the goal he has set for himself. Sometimes this success is achieved easily, and sometimes with great difficulty. Success does not come easily in any of these 23 books! The trend seems to be, happily, away from the unrealistic easy success. This is very closely connected with treatment of life in the books. Alm's "honest portrayal of human life"[4] (p. 598), Dunning's "pretend to treat life truthfully" (p. 61), and Burton's "fundamentally serious, presenting characters who are complex people with dignity"[5] (p. 65), are certainly continued in these 23 novels.

Among his *Recommended Novels*, Alm found heroes and heroines to be about the same age—17. Among his *Not*

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[2]In addition to the studies from which I quote in this article, I have also investigated the following: (1) Nathan S. Blount. *The Effect of Selected Junior Novels and Selected Adult Novels on Student Attitudes Toward the "Ideal" Novel.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation (Tallahassee: Florida State University, 1963). (2) William Howard Evans. *A Comparison of the Effects of a Superior Junior Novel and Silas Marner on the Ability of Tenth-Grade Students To Read the Novel.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation (Tallahassee: Florida State University, 1961). (3) Bertha Handlan. *A Comparison of the Characteristics of Certain Adolescent Reading and the Qualities of the Books They Read.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1945).

[3]Dorothy J. Petitt. *A Study of the Qualities of Literary Excellence Which Characterize Selected Fiction for Younger Adolescents.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1961).

[4]Richard S. Alm. *A Study of the Assumptions Concerning Human Experience Underlying Certain Works of Fiction For and About Adolescents.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1954).

[5]Dwight L. Burton. *Literature Study in the High Schools* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1954).

Recommended novels, he found two age groups: (1) 14-15 and (2) 19-20. In my study there are many exceptions to this: *Roosevelt Grady* has a hero nine years old. Sergeant Williams, in *Silence Over Dunkerque*, is in his late thirties. George is ten and Raymond 11 in *Raymond and Me That Summer*. Hosteen Storm, in *Lord of Thunder*, is probably in his mid-twenties, though his age is not stated. The title character in *Jamie* is 12. The characters in *Snow in the River* are middle-aged by the close of the novel, and none of their teen-age experiences is recounted.

Dunning says that "most junior novels reflect the mores and living standards of the upper middle class" (pp. 64-65). Socially and economically, fortunate families are still treated in the main, but there are enough exceptions to indicate a trend—*Savage Sam*, *Roosevelt Grady*, *Raymond and Me That Summer*, *Bristle Face*, *Jamie*, *The Far-Off Land*, *Windigo*, *Catseye*, and *Drop-Out*. Nine of the 23 are a large minority.

BOTH Dunning and Burton agree that these books seldom contain either profanity, or allusions to any sexual activity other than kisses. This is still true for the most part, but a *hard* look revealed some profanity in *The Pond* and some slight taboo violations in *Snow in the River* and *Almost Like Sisters*. For example, from *Snow in the River:*

> A thin girl with untidy hair and a pair of sailor's boots on her feet sat in a corner opposite, and looked at him with calculating eyes. He avoided her gaze, and when she followed him into the street, he had no patience with her. He shook her plucking fingers off his sleeve.
>
> "Nay lass, ye're too easy," he said. "I like to pick my own." (p. 20)

and later in the same book:

> He looked down at the flower-clad shoulders, the bare, pink tipped breasts, the small feet naked on the red hotel carpet. He could forgive her anything. (p. 113)

Although there are only one or two kisses in *Almost Like Sisters*, Victoria, the 17-year-old, becomes jealous of her mother when Pietro, the Italian graduate student who has been dating Victoria, kisses Mrs. Logan happy New Year. Victoria causes quite a scene. At the end of the story, Mrs. Logan is going to marry an old family friend, and she and her fiancee go off to have dinner leaving Victoria alone with Pietro in the apartment. Admittedly, this is pretty mild and reflects no trend.

Petitt observed that junior novels were told either by a first-person narrator, a third-person omniscient observer-analyst, or an effaced narrator (p. 319), whereas Burton says that they are told almost invariably from an "omiscient" point of view (p. 64). Certainly omniscient point of view still predominates, but some interesting experimentation is going on. For example, in *The Shelter Trap*, there are four points of view at different times, and with each shift there is also a marked shift in language. Sometimes the point of view is that of the author and not one of his characters. *Who Wants Music on Monday?* is told from four points of view also, with a slight shift in emphasis, style, and even structure with each shift. *Raymond and Me That Summer* is very intimate first person in the diction of a ten-year-old (George). Occasionally, George does not tell details that are "not the reader's business," as he says. *Classmates by Request* has two points of view, one giving a high school Negro girl's viewpoint on integration and the other giving that of a white high school girl. Although in *Snow in the River* the daughter of Angus McBain serves as a kind of "carrier of memories," and the point of view is really omniscient, the emphasis shifts from character to character.

Dunning, Petitt, and Burton say that

the junior novel is didactic, but less directly so than earlier counterparts in the history of the development of a literature for young people. Petitt says that often "an older character takes on the function of giving advice and interpreting the meaning of events for the young hero and heroine. These passages are always tied to a situation; they never represent advice or generalizations about human nature unrelated to that situation" (p. 309).

IN 19 of the 23 novels included in this study, didacticism is quite evident. In most of these 19 there is also an older character who takes on the function of an interpreter. Usually this older person is a parent, more often the father, but sometimes it is a coach (*Pitcher and I*), or a caretaker (*The Pond*), and in one case a burnt-out star, Mrs. Whatsit (*A Wrinkle in Time*). In *The Shelter Trap* didacticism seems to be satirized in the person of the teacher, Miss Barret. Only *Silence Over Dunkerque*, *Roosevelt Grady*, and *Savage Sam* have no evident didacticism. *A Wrinkle in Time* and *The Far-Off Land* contain the New Testament message of love. The author seems to preach through the characters in *Classmates by Request*. Annixter moralizes directly only on the last page—"If there was a *Windigo* it was the demon of greed and hate and fear that got into men's minds. . . . But the Valley itself was pure and blameless, as his father had always said" (p. 196).

Alm says that "the themes reflect, for the most part, the major concerns of adolescents—the need for a satisfactory heterosexual adjustment, the desire for independence from adult authority, the need for affection and security. In most of the stories, the characters are concerned with the problems of growing up, of becoming increasingly mature" (pp. 112-113). Dunning implies the same idea in his tentative definition of the junior novel—"an extended piece of prose fiction written for adolescents which has known adolescent activities or interests as central elements of the plot. It pretends to treat life truthfully" (p. 61). Later as two of his five characteristics of the junior novel, Dunning says that they mirror adolescent's interests accurately and that maturity or growing up is a typical thematic concern. Burton is in agreement.

Certainly these same thematic concerns hold true, but Summers has added satire. In *The Shelter Trap*, he seems to satirize the following: (1) teachers generally, (2) talented students, (3) special education, (4) civil defense, (5) educational television, (6) parents, (7) jargon, (8) abstract sciences, (9) radio and television commercials, and (10) law enforcement officials. New thematic concerns also occur in many of the other novels. School dropouts and teen-age marriages are dealt with in *Drop-Out*. Race relations are treated in *Roosevelt Grady* (which also concerns the migrant worker). In *Who Wants Music on Monday?* Vince has both a white South Carolinian and a Negro as roommates, and the race theme is also present in *The Pond* in Joey's relationship to Sharkee, the Negro hermit. In *Jamie*, Jamie Carson's friendship with Kiewet, a Negro boy his own age, provides one of the main themes. Internal resentment of a Negro fireman to a white engineer on the train also appears. Bennett explores this more fully as race conflict in *Mister Fisherman* (1965). *Classmates by Request* is also a story about integration.

THE depression years (*Raymond and Me That Summer*) seem to be a relatively new thematic area. There is a certain broadening in both setting (modern Africa) and mode (naturalistic irony) in *Jamie*. The *Far-Off Land* and *A Wrinkle in Time* have strong overtones of Christian love and passivism. Science fiction, with increased amounts of fantasy, continues as a popular theme in *A Wrinkle*

in Time, Lord of Thunder, and *Catseye.* A new emphasis in the historical novel, which has had its ebbs and flows, is shown in *Snow in the River, The Far-Off Land,* and *Silence Over Dunkerque.*

Although many of the novels are told against a background of dropouts, teenage marriages, racial tensions, war, the bomb, conformity, and general anxiety, there is also a romantic tendency to go far into the future with works like *Catseye* and *A Wrinkle in Time,* in which new vocabulary has to be created to cover the concepts, or backward in time to pioneer America (*The Far-Off Land*) or the west of the past century (*Savage Sam* or *Snow in the River*). Perhaps teenagers identify, consciously or sub-consciously, with characters who are not their contemporaries more than we have thought. Perhaps the time-lapse factor may even be an advantage if the characters and events are treated truthfully.

Conclusions seem somewhat out of place here, since the entire paper has consisted of them, but certainly some general observations are in order. The junior novel is definitely being perpetuated, with some changes in thematic emphasis and limited but interesting experimentation in such aspects as point of view. The thematic shifts reflect such obvious areas as racial tension and space travel, but the books also seem to indicate a modest resurgence of the historical novel and some use of satire. Many of the recent junior novels are not only well written, but if the 23 studied here are in any way typical, they are improving to the point that some of them may well survive as classics no longer labeled with a qualifier.

Twenty-three Selected Junior Novels

Annixter, Paul and Jane. *Windigo.* New York: Holiday House, 1963. 196 pp.

Ball, Zachary. *Bristle Face.* New York: Holiday House, 1962. 219 pp.

Bennett, Jack. *Jamie.* Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1963. 243 pp.

Brink, Carol. *Snow in the River.* New York: The Macmillan Company, 1964. 308 pp.

Caudill, Rebecca. *The Far-Off Land.* New York: The Viking Press, 1964. 237 pp.

Cavanna, Betty. *Almost Like Sisters.* New York: William Morrow and Company, 1963. 254 pp.

Cole, Stephen. *Pitcher and I.* New York: Farrar, Straus and Company, 1963. 156 pp.

Colman, Hila. *Classmates by Request.* New York: William Morrow and Company, 1964. 187 pp.

Eyerly, Jeanette. *Drop-Out.* New York: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1963. 189 pp.

Felson, Henry Gregor. *Boy Gets Car.* New York: Random House, 1960. 314 pp.

Gipson, Fred. *Savage Sam.* New York: Harper and Row, 1962. 214 pp.

L'Engle, Madeleine. *A Wrinkle in Time.* New York: Farrar, Straus and Geroux, 1962. 211 pp.

Murphy, Robert. *The Pond.* New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1964. 254 pp.

Neville, Emily. *It's Like This, Cat.* New York: Harper and Row, 1963. 180 pp.

Norton, Andre. *Catseye.* New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1961. 192 pp.

..... *Lord of Thunder.* New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1962. 192 pp.

Perry, Dick. *Raymond and Me That Summer.* New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1963. 182 pp.

Scholz, Jackson. *Dugout Tycoon.* New York: William Morrow and Company, 1963. 254 pp.

Sherburne, Zoa. *River at Her Feet.* New York: William Morrow and Company, 1965. 189 pp.

Shotwell, Louisa R. *Roosevelt Grady.* Cleveland, Ohio: The World Publishing Company, 1963. 151 pp.

Stolz, Mary. *Who Wants Music on Monday?* New York: Harper and Row, 1963. 267 pp.

Summers, James L. *The Shelter Trap.* Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962. 160 pp.

Tunis, John R. *Silence Over Dunkerque.* New York: William Morrow and Company, 1962. 215 pp.